

Issue #85

April 13—26, 2006

THE INDYPENDENT

A Free Paper
For Free People

A Sleeping Giant Awakes

Full coverage of the Immigration Battle from Arizona to the Big Apple, starting p.3

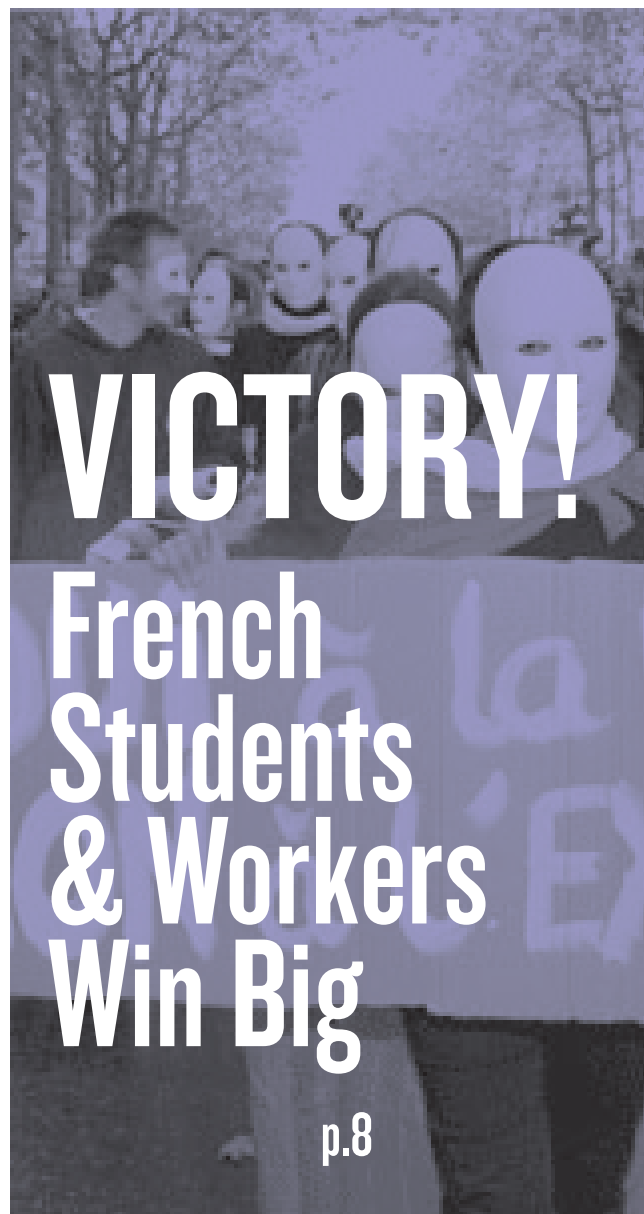
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Gary Martin



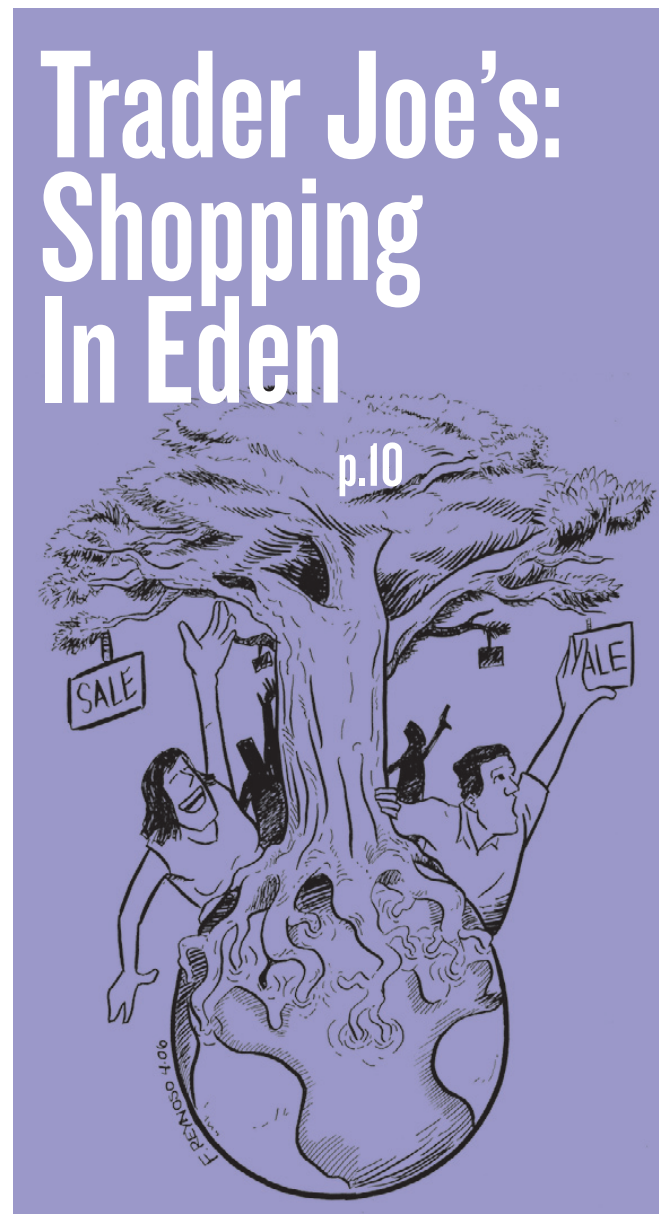
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indypendent.org



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WHAT IS INDYMEDIA?

With autonomous chapters in more than 150 cities throughout the world, the Independent Media Center is an international network of volunteer media activists.

The IMC seeks to create a new media ethic by providing progressive, in-depth and accurate coverage of issues. We are a community-based organization using media to facilitate political and cultural self-representation. We seek to analyze issues affecting individuals, communities and ecosystems by providing media tools and space to those seeking to communicate. We espouse open dialogue and placing the means of communication and creativity back in the hands of the people, away from the drive of profit.

The Independent is funded by benefits, subscriptions, donations, grants and ads from organizations and individuals with similar missions.

WHAT CAN I DO TO GET INVOLVED?

The IMC has an open door. You can write and distribute for *The Independent*, videotape events and rallies, update the website, self-publish articles to the web, take photos or just help us run the office. As an organization relying on volunteer support, we encourage all forms of participation.

The print team reserves the right to edit articles for length, content and clarity. We welcome your participation in the entire editorial process.

VOLUNTEER STAFF:

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A P R I L

events

Saturday, April 15

2:00–5:00pm • FREE
INDYKIDS BAKE SALE

Come out, purchase home-made baked goods and support IndyKids, a new progressive current-events newspaper for kids in grades 4 to 8 in the NYC area. Papers will be available and jugglers will entertain kids of all ages.

Union Square South, 14th St and Broadway • info: 212-592-0116 • Rain date: Sunday, April 16.

Sunday, April 16

7:00pm • FREE
READING: RICHARD DAY

Gramsci is dead, If revolutionary politics are to be reconstituted for the 21st century, all previously existing radical traditions must not only be remade but placed in new relationships with one another. Bluestockings, 172 Allen St (at Stanton, 1 blk S of Houston) • Info: 212-777-6028.

Monday, April 17

6:30pm–10:00pm • \$5
A CELEBRATION FOR INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL PRISONERS

Ashanti Alston from Jericho Movement, Toni from Leonard Peltier Defense Committee, Frank Velgara from ProLibertad and others. Performance by Tre'Dee and T. Hayes El of Collective Flow, Photo Exhibit of International Political Prisoners. Hunter College West Building Room 217 (68th St & Lexington Ave off the 6 train) • nycjericho@riseup.net • www.jerichony.org.

7:00pm • \$10/\$5
SCREENING: "EL ENEMIGO COMUN (THE COMMON ENEMY)."

Shown as part of "Through the Lens" film series, documents instances of paramilitary activity against indigenous communities in Oaxaca, Mexico 2002-2005. Bluestockings, 172 Allen St (at Stanton, 1 blk S of Houston) • Info: 212-777-6028.

Tuesday & Wednesday, April 18–19

10:00am–6:00pm • FREE
SPRING CRAFTS FAIR

On the main campus of Columbia University in Morningside Heights! Great vendors and home-cooked (and affordable) food! Profits for the event support The Red Balloon Learning Center, a thriving community preschool and day care center for children of working families. Columbia's Low Library Campus at 116th Street and Broadway. • 212-663-9006. • Raindate: Thursday April 20

OUT NOW!

New York Marches Against Forever War

April 29.org

Noon — Union Square

A DAY WITHOUT IMMIGRANTS: MAY DAY NO WORK • NO SCHOOL • NO JOKE

International Workers Day, May 1

info: ImmigrantSolidarity.org

Wednesday, April 19

8:00pm-??? • \$7-\$20
SAVE DEEP DISH TV!
A CELEBRATION OF INDEPENDENT MEDIA AND AN ATTEMPT TO KEEP IT ALIVE.

There is an early screening of Deep Dish TV's *Fallujah* Later, dance to the music of Sparlha Swa, the Hungry Marching Band, and Paprika. The Glass Bead Collective will VJ to beats from several badass DJs. Galapagos Art Space, 70 N. 6th St, Williamsburg • www.deepdishtv.org.

Thursday, April 20

5:00pm • FREE
"THE HEALTH CARE EMERGENCY IN OUR COMMUNITIES: INEQUITIES & THE INSURANCE CRISIS."
W/Bylye Y Avery (Avery Institute Social Change & Black Women's Health Imperative) and myriad doctors from the city's hospitals. Harlem Hospital, meeting room 6101, Martin Luther King Pavilion, reception in room 6104, 135th St & Malcolm X Blvd • 212-666-4001 • pnhpnyc@igc.org.

7:00pm • \$7-\$10 suggested
TALK: "THE WHOLESALE CRIMINALIZATION OF IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES: MASS DETENTIONS, TORTURE & EXILE."
W/JeanetteGabriel. Clemente Soto Velez Center, 107 Suffolk St, 2nd fl Art Gallery • 800-377-6183 • new-space@mutualaid.org

8:00 pm • Donations suggested!

FILM: "THE FUTURE OF FOOD."
This movie rocks! Its made by Deborah Koons Garcia and is the best film to date on genetically modified foods. Time's Up!, 49 E Houston St (btw Mott & Mulberry) •

Friday, April 21

12:00–7:00pm, & Sat, 11–5pm
BIG ASS EARTH DAY FAIR.
Despite its corporate sponsorship, it has some rocking stuff and lots of good guys with booths. At Grand Central Terminal. www.earthdayny.org/earthday_2006.html

7:30pm • \$\$
SCREENING: "NO!"

A documentary about sexual violence in the Black community. 520 8th Ave, btw 36 & 37th Sts.

Friday & Saturday, April 21–22

12:00 • FREE
VIGIL: 3RD ANNUAL SEXUAL ASSAULT, YEARLY SPEAK OUT (SAYSO!).
Every half-hour a performance introduces the powerful words of survivors, as well as their friends & families. Union Square Park • 212-229-0345 • Sponsored by NYC Alliance Against Sexual Assault.

Saturday, April 22

8:00pm-midnight • FREE

Be the Media! You are invited to the Independent Media Center's Open House

Join our video, radio, print, photo and web teams, all levels of experience welcome.

Tuesday, April 25, 6:30pm • 4 West 43rd St. Suite 311

EVENT: 2ND ANNUAL TRANS-PROM.

For transgender, gender non-conforming people, partners, friends & allies. 18 years & older. LGBT Community Center, 208 W 13th St • 212-564-3608.

Tuesday, April 25

10:00am–2:00pm
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ANNUAL COMMUNITY FORUM:

Join service providers, domestic violence and non-domestic violence agencies to bring to the forefront a discussion on protocols within the New York City Police Department, the role of ACS and the court system to ensure the safety of both victims and child. 1918 First Ave, Draper Hall • <http://vipmujeres.org>.

Friday, April 28

6:00–9:00pm • FREE
ART GALLERY EXHIBIT & RECEPTION START A REVOLUTION!
Documents the lives of exceptional American counter-culture artists (Funky Black Angels) living and creating in New York City. Capla/Kesting Gallery, 121 Roebling St, Williamsburg • tyronebrownosborne@yahoo.com areaboypictures.com

9:00pm (after Critical Mass) • \$10+

BENEFIT FOR DANIEL MCGOWAN

Fundraiser for local activist facing decades behind bars as part of a national sweep targeting alleged "eco-defenders." 84 Clinton Ave. Apt. #1 (btw. Myrtle & Park) A or G to Clinton/Washington supportDaniel.org

Saturday, April 29

4:00pm–12:00am • \$10 in advance, \$12 door.
LIVEWIRE FESTIVAL 2006
Performers Include: M-1 of Dead Prez, Choking Victim, Ricanstruction, The Black 100's, Rabia, R-Tronika, a pro-skate demo and more. 313 Meserole St, Brooklyn.

Sunday, April 30

12:00–8:00pm • FREE
WORKSHOPS BY THE PRISON MORATORIUM PROJECT, GRASS-ROOTS ARTIST MOVEMENT, THE ICARUS PROJECT, AND MANY MORE
Plus guest speakers, a rooftop lunch, and an after party with the Hip Project and special guests. Office Ops, 57 Thames St, Brooklyn • 347-284-6106 • misledyouth@yahoo.com.

WHERE DO I GET MY COPY OF THE INDYPENDENT?

A FREE PAPER FOR FREE PEOPLE

BELOW 14TH ST.

Bluestockings Books & Café
172 Allen St.

Times Up!
49 E. Houston St.

Lotus Café
Clinton & Stanton Sts.

May Day Books Theater for the New City
155 First Ave. (Btw. 9th & 10th Sts.)

Housing Works
126 Crosby St.

LGBT Center
213 W. 13th St.

Shakespeare & Co. Books
1 Whitehall St.

Brecht Forum
451 West St.

14TH TO 96TH ST.

Revolution Books
9 W. 19th St.
Chelsea Sq. Diner
23rd St. & 9th Ave.

Domvys
413 W. 44th St.

Second Wave Laundrocenter
55th St. & 9th Ave.

ABOVE 96TH ST.

Labyrinth Books
536 W. 112th St.

Kim's Video
113th St. & Broadway

Karrot
181st St. & Cabrini

BROOKLYN

Vox Pop
1022 Cortelyou Rd.

Tillie's of Brooklyn
248 DeKalb Ave.

Green Apple Café
110 DeKalb Ave.

Metropolitan Laundromat
561 Metropolitan St.

Freddy's Bar and Backroom
Dean St. & 6th Ave.

Community Book Store
7th Ave. & Carroll Sts.

Tea Lounge
Union St. @ 7th Ave.
9th St. @ 7th Ave.

Atlantis Super Laundry Center
472 Atlantic Ave.

Photoplay Video
933 Manhattan Ave.

Verb Cafe
Bedford Ave. & N. 5th

Food for Thought Cafe
456 Nostrand Ave.

Veggie Castle
2242 Church Ave.

Make the Road by Walking
301 Grove St.

Spoken Word Cafe
4th Ave. & Union St.

QUEENS

Sunnyside Library
43-06 Greenpoint Ave.

Broadway Library
4020 Broadway

BRONX

Bronx Museum
165th St. & Grand Concourse

The Point
940 Garrison Ave.

Baychester Library
2049 Asch Loop

JERSEY CITY

Five Corners Library
678 Newark Ave.

got a spot that's hot for the Indy?

email: imc-nyc-print@indymedia.org

for a full list, see indypendent.org

High Stakes in the Border Battle

BY AARTI SHAHANI

Last month, as thousands of students walked out of their schools to protest pending immigration bills in Congress, 17-year-old Julio Beltre stood in front of New York's Federal Plaza to tell the story of his father, Juan Beltre: On a morning in April 2005, before the sun rose six agents from the Department of Homeland Security had woken up his father and dragged him away from their Bronx home. His wife and four children — all U.S. citizens — watched in horror.

Why was he being seized? Juan Beltre had committed a single drug-possession offense dating back to 1995. But in those 10 long years, Beltre had completed probation, was a long-term green card holder — and was now suffering from a brain tumor.

"Now my mom has to raise us alone," his son recounted at the demonstration. His father was deported back to the Dominican Republic.

Which Way Will The Pendulum Swing?

The debate is as complex as it is heated. Before it recessed, the Senate Judiciary Committee was debating an immigration bill that would, if passed into law:

- expand the grounds of deportation;
- use domestic military bases for immigration detention;
- legalize the indefinite detention of non-citizens;
- authorize New York City police and other local officers to enforce federal immigration laws;
- erect a border fence;
- enable Homeland Security agents to expel suspected foreigners indiscriminately; and
- create a national identification system for all workers.

Yet many are hailing this as success. The front page of New York's largest Spanish language paper, *El Diario*, exclaimed "TRIUMFAMOS." Meanwhile, restrictionist commentator Lou Dobbs campaigned against the bill on television and in Mexico.

This ironic role reversal stems from one section of the proposed bill, the guestworker legalization provisions. Under the leadership of Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Penn.), the Judiciary Committee voted 12-6 to approve a new visa program, devised by Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) and Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), under which undocumented workers would have to register with the government, main-

tain continuous employment for six years, pay back and future taxes, and pass civics and English lessons in order to apply for a green card. Some claim the Senate bill as a victory because undocumented workers would have a potential pathway to work and live lawfully in the United States.

Fighting To Keep The Legalization Provisions

Advocates are fighting to prevent the "earned legalization" provisions from being watered down. The main variable is whether or not the visa granted to undocumented workers will lead to a green card and eventual citizenship.

We are now at a crossroads. While the nation's attention is focused on the legalization question, lawmakers have guaranteed only one thing: there will be no legalization-only bill. If the Senate ultimately approves anything, it will go to a closed-door conference committee to be resolved with the House bill passed in Dec. 2005. The House bill concedes no green cards. Its only common ground with the Senate is provisions to expand detentions, deportations and border police.

A shared history underlies the consensus. September 11 transformed immigration into a national security debate with Democrats and Republicans both convinced that any immigration reform must come with tighter controls. But as the Beltre family illustrates,



SEA OF FLAGS: Immigrants flexed their muscles and have beaten back provisions in the Senate bill that criminalize undocumented workers. PHOTO: FredAske.com

the New York congressional delegation has to resolve the national security agenda with a powerful reality: non-citizens are not the only affected population.

Ten Years Of Deportations

It's not the act of terror we remember best. In April 1995, a white veteran of the first Gulf War blew up the Oklahoma City federal building. One year later, to memorialize that tragedy then-President Bill Clinton signed a sweeping immigration enforcement measure: the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act. A sister bill, the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act, passed just months later.

Together, the 1996 laws transformed the meaning of membership in America and substantially ramped up policing based on citizenship. There was no legalization or guest-worker program. Instead, there were sweeping deportation measures that empowered the executive branch to more easily expel people already within our borders.

Prior to the 1996 laws, a New Yorker placed in deportation proceedings could typically go before an immigration judge and seek a pardon if she could demonstrate that she was no threat to society and had significant ties to her U.S. community. But the new laws instituted a system of mandatory deportation and detention whereby the vast major-

ity of New Yorkers facing deportation are held in immigrant prisons without bail and have no opportunity to plead their case before an immigration judge.

More than 1.3 million people have been expelled from the United States in the last 10 years, and immigrants have become the fastest-growing segment of our prison population. Taxpayers are footing the bill for the ever-growing deportation budget. American veterans, breadwinners and people who have lived here since infancy have been deported through this process.

Plea Bargains Lead To Deportations

In New York, as in other cities, the criminal justice system is a cornerstone of the immigration policing strategy. Defense attorneys advise clients to plea to lesser charges in order to secure a deal with little or no jail time. Every week, hundreds of immigrant New Yorkers arrested for garden-variety crimes plead guilty under this plea-bargain system. However, a second punishment may follow: detention and deportation. As the federal immigration authorities' reliance on local criminal institutions grows, there is no countervailing process to ensure that the rights of immigrants are observed.

Connecting Past & Present Policy

The New York congressional delegation has been nearly mute on how America's immigration are harming families — with one recent exception. On March 28, 2006, Congressman Jose Serrano of the Bronx introduced the Child Citizen Protection Act, a bill to restore partial discretion to immigration judges in cases where removal of an immigrant is clearly against the best interests of a U.S. citizen child. But the other members of Congress from New York are largely silent despite the New York families who flood their district offices — families already devastated by deportation.

"Our leaders need to change the laws," Julio Beltre concluded his speech during the demonstration at Federal Plaza, "before more young people like me get hurt." On April 24, the 10-year anniversary of the 1996 laws, he and other New Yorkers will converge in Washington, D.C., with families from other cities whose lives have changed because of deportation.

Aarti Shahani is a co-founder of Families for Freedom, a Brooklyn-based defense network for immigrant families facing deportation. This is an edited version of an article originally published by the Gotham Gazette, www.gothamgazette.com.



PHOTO: Erin Siegal

SENATE BILL: Classic Divide & Conquer

Immigrants rallied in the millions to protest the punitive bill in the House of Representatives, but what do they want? Many unions and immigrant rights groups have backed the McCain-Kennedy bill. A compromise Senate bill, like its House counterpart, pumps more funds into detentions, deportations and a militarized border, but it includes a guest-worker program and provisions that make it possible for undocumented immigrants to eventually become citizens.

However, many immigrant groups are also critical of the Senate bill. The "compromise" would create three tiers of immigrants. At the top would be an estimated 7 million who have lived here at least five years and would have a chance to become citizens. But it would involve paying \$2,000 for a work visa and any back taxes, having a background check as well as a medical exam, registering for selective service, learning English, and taking a civics class.

In the middle are an estimated 3 million who have been in the country for two to five years and would have to travel back to a port of entry to get a work visa. On the last rung are 1.5 million immigrants that have lived here for less than two years and would be subject to deportation outright. If immigrant groups support such a divisive bill, it will further split a Latino community that is already far from monolithic. —B. Baumer

Local Solutions to the Energy Dilemma

April 27-29, 2006 in NYC



A Peak Oil Conference for NYC

Sponsored by Peak Oil NYC, Local Energy Solutions LLC and the Five Borough Institute (a 501c3 organization)

The Conference has two goals:

1. To inform the public that energy prices are rising because of "Peak Oil," the point at which production stops increasing and goes into permanent decline.
2. To discuss realistic, sustainable local responses to the situation.

Speakers & Panelists

Over 30 authors, energy experts, ecologists & sustainability specialists including:

John Darnell	Energy and Environment Projects Coordinator for Rep. Roscoe Bartlett (R-MD)
Catherine A. Fitts	Former Federal Housing Commissioner at HUD
Derrick Jensen	Author, <i>The Culture of Make Believe</i>
Michael Klare	Author, <i>Resource Wars</i> and <i>Blood & Oil</i>
James Kunstler	Author, <i>The Long Emergency</i>
Geoff Lawton	Permaculture Consultant & Teacher, Permaculture Research Institute
Faith Morgan	Filmmaker, <i>Cuba - Artificial Peak Oil: Transformation of a Society</i>
Dale Allen Pfeiffer	Geologist and Science Journalist
David Pimentel	Prof. of Ecology and Agricultural Sciences, Cornell Univ.
Michael Ruppert	Author, <i>Crossing the Rubicon</i>
Matt Savinar	Author, <i>The Oil Age Is Over</i>

Additional Information

Conference Location

Day 1 - Thursday, 4/27/06
Community Church of NYC
40 East 35th Street
NY, NY 10016

Days 2 & 3 - Fri/Sat, 4/28-29/06
Manhattan Center's
Grand Ballroom
311 West 34th Street
NY, NY 10001

Registration 8 - 9:30am every day

Purchase tickets online at:

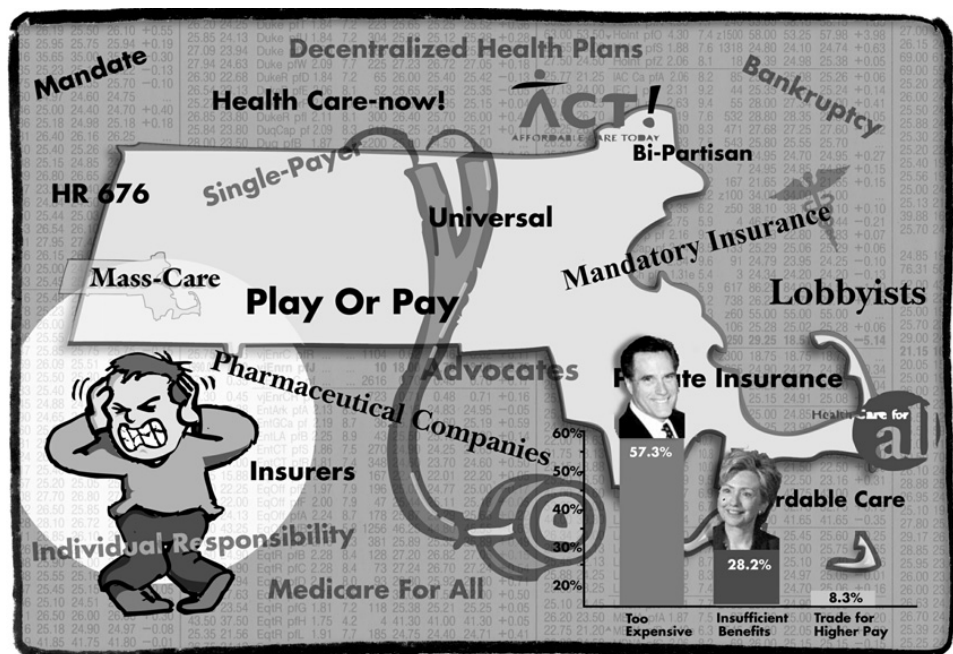
www.energysolutionsconference.org

For further information contact:

Local Energy Solutions LLC /
Five Borough Institute
PO Box 654
New York, NY 10116

Phone: 845.639.8304

info@energysolutionsconference.org



Mass. Healthcare Giveaway

Big insurance and pharma poised to make billions, citizens saddled with the bill

BY ERIN THOMPSON

Ted Kennedy supports it. Hillary Clinton supports it. And the insurance, hospital and pharmaceutical industries most certainly support it.

Welcome to Massachusetts' brave new world of healthcare reform, which promises to banish "the old single-payer canard," in the words of Republican Gov. Mitt Romney, by emphasizing "personal responsibility" and mandating that all state residents purchase private health insurance. Massachusetts is set to become a testing ground for profit-driven healthcare reform and a possible model for other states.

"I think other states might try to pass this bill, but they'll find out, like Massachusetts, that this bill is a hoax," said Dr. Steffie Woolhandler, an internist and associate professor of medicine at Harvard, and a founder of Physicians for a National Health Program (PNHP), a single-payer advocacy group.

"It's a bad bill — it is a political response to a political problem," added Dr. Alan Sager, director of Boston University's Health Reform Program. He notes that bipartisan enthusiasm for the bill had less to do with its feasibility than with the impending loss of \$385 million in federal Medicaid funds if the state failed to address the problem of the uninsured.

Lawmakers estimate the number of uninsured in the state at 550,000, while the U.S. Census Bureau put it at 750,000 in 2004.

"The New York Times, Washington Post, ABC, CBS, NBC, have just been hysterical in their praise for this law. They have not looked at whether or not it can work, whether there's enough money behind it," said Sager.

The new law mandates that beginning in July 2007 all Massachusetts residents either purchase a plan or be taxed up to 50 percent of the cost of insurance, which averages \$4,000 per individual and \$11,000 for family coverage in the state. For those making less than 100 percent of the poverty level, their insurance will be fully subsidized, while those earning up to 300 percent would receive a sliding scale of subsidies.

Implementing the program might be more difficult than passing it. "I wouldn't put too much on [the] initial wave of endorsements," said Benjamin Day, executive director of Mass-Care, a healthcare reform advocacy group. Day thinks there is a good chance the program will be delayed and called it "a step in the wrong direction." He said that the bill lacks "any attempt to contain or cut costs."

Massachusetts healthcare costs are estimated at \$59 billion for 2006 alone, and the program offers little in the way of subsidies. The bill budgets \$58 million for private insurance subsidies in the first year, and \$125

million in subsequent years, far below estimates that it will cost up to \$4 billion to provide these subsidies.

"It's a sham," said Dr. Leo Rodberg, an associate professor of health policy at Queens College and a co-founder of PHNP. According to Rodberg, most of the subsidies won't even make it to the intended recipients. Instead, the money will go "mainly to the large hospitals that serve the poor. Almost no new money is [in] this program to provide insurance," he said.

If subsidies are inadequate, those who can't afford the cost of insurance will have to buy barebone policies that won't guarantee healthcare, in what Dr. Sager called, "imaginary health insurance for real people."

WHAT IS SINGLE-PAYER HEALTHCARE?

Single-payer would be a publicly funded system relying on taxing individuals and employers in order to extend healthcare to all Americans, similar to Medicare and Medicaid. Such a system would save money by eliminating administrative and marketing waste while allowing doctors to practice preventative medicine. House bill HR 676, which was introduced by John Conyers (D-Mich.) and proposes a single-payer "Medicare for all" system, has 68 co-sponsors, but little chance of being passed in a Republican-controlled Congress.

For single-payer proponents, the program represents a "last ditch attempt by the corporate insurance companies and their cohorts to keep the profits coming into their coffers," said Marilyn Clement, executive director of Health Care-Now, which is pushing for a national single-payer system.

The program was heavily pushed by insurers, pharmaceutical companies and hospitals. According to the *Boston Globe*, healthcare lobbyists received \$7.5 million in 2005, far more than any other industry lobby in the state. Big spenders on lobbying included Blue Cross-Blue Shield of Massachusetts and Harvard Pilgrim Health Care, which stand to gain tens of thousands of new customers. Big businesses in general also joined the lobbying battle, replacing a provision which placed a steep tax on employers that fail to provide health insurance with a modest levy of \$295 per employee instead.

"If you look at the money involved here, it's very clear what this is about and what it is not about," said Rodberg.

The perceived success or failure of the new law could prove to be a watershed as other states eye their own healthcare crises. "[This is] a high-profile bill... All eyes will really be on Massachusetts," said Day.

Gary Martin

New Orleans Survivors Fight for Vote

BY RENEE FELTZ

HOUSTON—Thousands of New Orleans residents are refusing to watch upcoming city elections from the sidelines, and they are working with supporters to ensure their right to participate.

Patricia O'Neil, evacuated to Houston from her home in the city's Ninth Ward, is frustrated by the number of obstacles she faces in order to cast her vote: "I'm offended that we have to take additional steps to vote," she said. "It should be exactly the way it was pre-Katrina. It should not be any different. I'm not registered in Houston, and I'm not going to, because I'm voting in New Orleans. And I'm not going to allow anyone to take my vote away."

Thousands of voters in Houston and areas within a day's drive of Louisiana plan to take buses to cities like Baton Rouge to participate in early voting for the April 22 open primary election instead of trusting their votes to be tallied by mail. They began leaving April 10 with full buses departing in the early morning hours from Houston. Most of the buses have been organized by local non-profit organizations, which say charging a fee for transportation would be the modern

equivalent to a poll tax.

The elections are being held at a time when New Orleans city leaders, led by real estate mogul Joe Canizaro, are talking about drastically shrinking the city's size and eliminating once-predominantly African-American neighborhoods like New Orleans East and the Lower Ninth Ward, which were heavily damaged by the storm.

It's estimated that 80 percent of New Orleans's black majority population still has not returned and will be the most heavily impacted by the out-of-state voting requirements. The elections went forward after a federal district court rejected a lawsuit by the NAACP and other groups to delay the vote, establish polling centers out of state and force the Federal Emergency Management Agency to turn over the addresses of evacuees to the campaigns.

The April 22 election is an open primary featuring 24 mayoral candidates from both parties. If no candidate receives over 50 percent of the vote, a runoff will be held May 20.

Of the leading candidates — beleaguered incumbent Ray Nagin, Louisiana Lt. Governor Mitch Landrieu, Audabon Institute CEO Ron Forman, Former City Councilwoman Peggy

Wilson and businessman Rob Couhig — Nagin is the only black. A victory by one of the others would make them New Orleans' first white mayor since the 1970s.

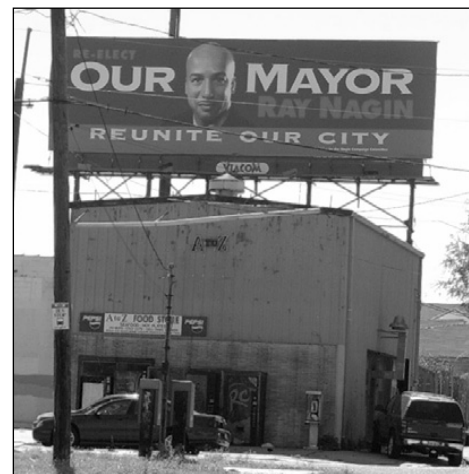
Obstacle Course

Displaced residents who want to register to vote must request a registration form, then that form must be mailed or hand-delivered. Officials recommended the forms be sent to Baton Rouge since the New Orleans mail system is running weeks behind.

Once registered — or if one is already registered — the next step is to request an absentee ballot through the same process. According to New Orleans Civil District Clerk, fewer than 10,000 registered voters have requested absentee ballots. Once an absentee ballot is sent and completed, a voter must have it notarized before it can be sent back and recorded. Until recently, first-time voters were told they would have to return to the city to cast their vote in the April 22 primary.

Voting in the election will also take place on election day in New Orleans, and at satellite voting precincts in Louisiana.

Even though candidates have met with voters in states all around the country, there will



DEMOCRACY INACTION: New Orleans mayor Ray Nagin seeks second term. PHOTO: Beka Goedde

be no satellite voting sites outside Louisiana, even in areas with large concentrations of evacuees. Critics who have called for a boycott of the election, like the Rev. Jesse Jackson, note this contrasts with the U.S. State Department's huge effort to establish satellite voting for Iraqi exiles living in the United States.

Jackson organized a march on New Orleans on April 1 that attracted thousands who opposed the election timing and process. He said the march was the most critical demonstration since the civil rights era. "Fast is not more important than fair. [During the Civil Rights Movement] we marched for fair elections, not fast elections."

Latino Workers Face Tough Conditions in New Orleans Clean-up

BY MICHAEL AGRESTA

NEW ORLEANS—Every morning in New Orleans, a group of Latino men line up by the side of a traffic circle named for Robert E. Lee, under a large banner reading: "Remember Those Suffering from Katrina and Rita." These men, whose faces change every day, have come to New Orleans over the past seven months following rumors of high-paying demolition and construction work. Few speak English, and many do not have visas to work in the United States. Adrift in a city with few resources for Latinos, they rely heavily on their employers, sometimes sleeping in the same hurricane-damaged buildings they work on all day. Caught between financial necessity and immigration law, they are unlikely to challenge the often unsafe work conditions they encounter as they do the dirty work of rebuilding New Orleans.

"Right now there are more ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) agents on the ground than Department of Labor agents," says Jennifer Whitney, co-founder and co-coordinator of the Latino Health Outreach Program, a weekly clinic offering free vaccinations and safety equipment to migrant laborers. "No one knows for sure how many migrant workers have passed through here, but tens of thousands is a reasonable estimate — doing really dangerous work without training or proper equipment."

On a typical Wednesday at Lee traffic cir-

cle, Whitney and a group of other activists from the Common Ground Health Clinic arrive at six in the morning to transform a gas station parking lot into the only Spanish-language clinic in greater New Orleans. Their vaccination program runs out of a few small coolers and focuses on tetanus and Hepatitis A, two pathogens common to flood-damaged buildings. On one side of the lot, an enthusiastic volunteer gives a flight attendant-style demonstration in Spanish on how to use a dual-cartridge respirator. In a more secluded space behind a station wagon, Whitney and other volunteers consult with patients who will need to arrange for a translator's help to visit a specialist. A shy, dark-skinned man with a large neck wound wanders up from the street and is escorted back to this area.

A Honduran man named Reyes waits while his friends receive their vaccinations. He tells me that he has lived in Houston and Baton Rouge before coming to New Orleans, and that New Orleans is more daunting for a Latino worker than those other cities. "The city here has not seen many Hispanics," he says. "The police are much tougher here."

Before Katrina, Latinos made up only 3 percent of the population of New Orleans, far below the norm for an American city of its size. While Latino immigration nationwide had peaked in recent decades, New Orleans's economy had lagged behind that of the rest of the country, and a large black underclass had served to fill the least desirable jobs. The exodus of



FRANCISCO, an immigrant worker from San Juan de Potosi, Mexico, learns that he needs to visit a local hospital to treat a breathing problem. PHOTO: Peter Holderness

poor blacks in the aftermath of Katrina cleared the way for migrant workers like Reyes to seek dangerous work cleaning out buildings that had festered for weeks in dirty water. President Bush's decision to waive requirements for employment eligibility documents opened up a great migration of day laborers from across Central and North America. Some now estimate that New Orleans is up to 30 percent Latino, though reliable data is unavailable.

On March 17 at Lee traffic circle, forty workers were arrested while waiting to be picked up for construction jobs. This was the largest of many immigration raids in New Orleans since last fall. Police have implied that migrant workers have ties to Central American gangs, and now sometimes strip detainees to their underwear to search for tattoos. The Advancement Project, a legal activist group working in New Orleans, tries to arrange support for detained migrant workers. However, according to Whitney, lawyers sometimes do not receive access to detainees for four days or more.

Spanish-speaking migrants are often perceived as an economic threat by both

black and white populations in New Orleans, and as a result they have difficulty finding political sympathy or logistical support. Whitney points to interracial worker associations in Los Angeles and other American cities as examples of what could be done right in the future. With her peers from the Common Ground Health Clinic, she hopes to help found a New Orleans Worker Justice Coalition, which would include a permanent health clinic for Latino laborers as well as some training and advocacy. "We expect that the numbers [of Latinos in New Orleans] will continue to go up," says Whitney. "We're not looking to be a disaster relief organization. We're going to stay."

For now, workers like Reyes are happy just to have the chance to pick up a much-needed vaccination and some functional safety equipment on the way to work. "The Latinos here don't know the city well," he says. "Without this, we'd have to go to a private clinic where the service would be very expensive. Many wouldn't do it."

For more info, see www.cghc.org, Common Ground Health Clinic.



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French Youth Protests Victorious

Student-Worker Movement Derails Government Jobs Plan, Humiliates Right

BY F. DANIEL

PARIS, FRANCE—After months of protests and two days of general strikes, on April 10 the right-wing government buckled and announced that it was replacing the CPE (First Employment Contract) with subsidies, tax breaks and other short-term contracts it claimed would spur youth hiring.

Left in place, however, were other aspects of the "Equality of Chance Law" that was introduced by Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin on Jan. 16 and which lowered the work age (for "apprenticeships") from 16 to 14 and legalized night work for teenagers as young as 15.

The CPE would have instituted temporary contracts for everyone under 26 whereby they could be summarily fired for the first two years. Although the CPE was non-renewable with the same company, a person under 26 could have a succession of contracts with different employers.

At least one-fourth of universities were shut down by student protests, with another half partially closed. One-quarter of high schools were also closed. Some occupied institutions, like the Sorbonne and the College de France, were forcibly retaken by special police forces.

Demonstrations since Feb. 7 rallied record numbers, with up to 3 million in the streets on March 28 and April 4. General assemblies of protesting groups and spontaneous demonstrations took place daily.

Especially in April, tactics diversified to include blockading and occupying roads, rail lines, postal centers, government offices and corporate centers.

While some unions and protest leaders hailed the government reversal as a victory and called for the mobilizations to end, others cautioned that the shift was intended to squelch the movement and that similar measures increasing job insecurity were still in place. The government's decision came a week before an April 17 deadline set by the unions.

Many student, labor and left organizations are still mobilized, and many universities and schools are still on strike. They are demanding that the government withdraw the entire CPE as well its precedent, the CNE, introduced last summer. This law allows businesses with fewer than 20 employees to fire workers — of any age — without cause for up to two years.

Hired to Be Fired

The issue is whether or not France will embrace neoliberal measures that establish a "flexible" word code and move toward American-style capitalism. Both



ON THE MOVE: Young French workers march against a controversial new employments law. After months of protests and strikes, the government withdrew the law. PHOTO: paris.indymedia.org

the CPE and the CNE are intended as precedents for "easy-hire, easy-fire" contracts for all workers.

Villepin and the association of employers argued that making firing easier would encourage the creation of jobs and reduce France's unemployment rate of 9.6 percent. Labor Minister Jean-Louis Borloo claimed April 7 that the CNE had led to the creation of more than 100,000 new jobs since its introduction last September. But the national statistics office said the real figure was as few as 20,000 jobs.

As for the CPE, right-wing analysts contended that it didn't go far enough toward replacing the long-term contract, enshrined in France's work code. Although economic growth is slow, consumer confidence low and unemployment high, the 40 top companies in France registered record profits in 2005, and the stock market is reaching new highs.

The enormity of the youth movement surprised both the government and unions. But it builds upon several recent trends...

Hence, one of the slogans was: "Do they take us for stupid?" Many students argue that the real goal is to do away with the right to employment for the purpose of increasing corporate profits. For youth, the movement is serving as a kind of "training," both in action and political consciousness.

The Makings of a Movement

The enormity of the youth movement surprised both the government and unions. But it builds upon several recent trends.

High-school student protests against educational reforms in 2004 and 2005 saw large demon-

strations and occupations that resulted in many arrests.

Last year, the nonpartisan campaign against the European Constitution politicized (or re-politicized) many others. Almost 55 percent of French voters rejected the constitution in a referendum in May, despite support from all the major parties. Many voters were convinced that shifting power to Brussels would reinforce the privatization and liberalization of the economy.

Then came the spontaneous uprisings last fall among youth in the projects, stemming from the same social conditions. Thus a law that would increase the economic difficulties of the youth sparked the explosion of protests, uniting elements of all of these struggles.

It's in the suburban projects, home to those of northern and sub-Saharan African descent, where some of the most militant high school and university occupations are occurring. Suburbs in Paris and other cities also saw a strong mobilization in the high school movements in 2005.

Some racially mixed youth from the suburbs participated in the mass demonstrations as "unorganized" groups of 50 or 100, often running through the march. Some large groups also entered unblocked schools and disrupted classes.

Some racial violence has also occurred, where young minorities who have little opportunity for higher education have targeted white university students, hitting them and stealing cellphones.

There has also been spontaneous property destruction by protesters, including torching and overturning cars. But the violence has been much more restrained than the American press would have it, and there have been many reports of police provocateurs inciting violence.

Arbitrary arrests and police violence have been extreme at times.

One victim of police violence is still in a coma. The police have arrested more than 4,000, with 1,270 summoned for trial and 68 already sentenced to prison.

The Ghost of '68

One student said the protests were like May 1968, but with an important difference. "Then, students knew they could finish school and get a steady job. Now, they know they'll have a hard time."

Some commentators have sniped that these students only want a job whereas the older generation wanted to change the world. However, the protests have intensified debates about "social models" that understand the current system is unacceptable, but which do not rely on ready-made answers about the socialist path to follow.

The fresh memory of relatively high social standards and job security provokes an outcry when these are whittled away in the name of "globalization." Not so used to job insecurity as workers in other countries, the French will not accept it without protest.

The ruling elite know that the more insecurity there is, the less workers are apt to protest — for they can't afford to miss work, and are often happy to have a job at all, even an insecure one.

Due to this insecurity, it may be difficult to sustain a mass movement, and it will probably continue as smaller, diversified actions.

Similar laws have been passed in other European countries without contestation. But France's role historically has been that of a spark. Other governments are afraid of it spreading, and since the French protests began, termed a "Global Warning" by the Guardian of London, there have been rumblings elsewhere.

For more, see libcom.org or paris.indymedia.org

Elections Confirm Racist Consensus

BY YONI MISHAL

TEL AVIV—Now that the Israeli elections have passed I wonder if anything ever happened at all. The political debate that tore families apart six years ago now sounds like the desert wind — a silent hush in a big vacuum.

On the night before the March 28 elections, I was sure people from all parties would be on the streets fighting for room to place their campaign posters. Yet, two friends and I were the only ones on the street. No young kids, no angry men stopping their cars and yelling at us. I knew there was a general sense of apathy in the air, but I was amazed to see how deep it ran.

These elections were truly a phenomenon. A friend who came for dinner a few weeks ago, said he was voting for Kadima, the party former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon built just a month before he went into a coma.

"Why?" We all asked at once.

He said he was voting for Kadima because it's Sharon's party. The man is practically dead! Many people shared this wishful thinking, as if Sharon will continue to lead us after the elections, perhaps miraculously rising from his bed after hearing the results.

On the other hand, the most common reason people gave for not voting Labor Party were purely racist — that party leader Amir Peretz has a mustache and his parent's came from an Arab country. There are several better reasons not to vote for Labor, namely their persistence in forming coalitions with right-wing governments, approving all their actions, and crying out loud about it at the same time. It appears they are heading that way again after finishing second in the election behind Kadima.

Sharon used silence as a strategy for winning the elections. It worked so well that



BALLOTS AND BULLETS: Israeli soldiers take time out from their routine to vote. "Racism has never had so many open supporters," said journalist Gideon Levy.

Ehud Olmert, his successor, refuses to talk about his plan for withdrawing from parts of the West Bank. His declarations remain vague. He is not saying now anything that he hasn't said before and he refuses to talk with the new Palestinian government led by Hamas. It makes me wonder if there is another reason not to talk with them; that whatever he has in mind could not be accepted by the Palestinians.

Olmert's plan is not likely to include stopping the separation wall, still cutting through villages and denying human rights by heavily restricting passage. It leaves the territories without any local infrastructure, making them dependent on third-world style

sweatshops and work permits from Israel. Most of the water supply is controlled by Israel. Palestinians have no control over their air space, sea ports and borders.

Another aspect of the plan is "land exchange," a euphemism for giving the Palestinians land in the center of Israel that is mostly occupied by Arabs in return for big settlement blocs in the most fertile parts of the West Bank. As Israeli journalist Gideon Levy recently wrote, "an absolute majority of MKs in the next Knesset do not believe in peace, nor do they even want it — just like their voters — and worse than that, don't regard Palestinians as equal human beings. Racism has never had so many open supporters."

WORLD BRIEFS



PERUVIAN POPULIST LEADS IN HOTLY CONTESTED ELECTION

Ollanta Humala heads into Peru's presidential run-off as the top vote-getter in the first round of voting held April 9. Humala, who unnerved Peru's upper classes with calls for redistributing wealth to the country's poor majority, received 31 percent of the vote.

Either former president Alan Garcia or conservative ex-congresswoman Lourdes Flores will face Humala in a June run-off. Humala's friendship with Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez and Bolivian leader Evo Morales has drawn Washington's ire. In February,

Humala, a former army commander, was accused of war crimes by the NGO coalition Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos del Peru. Humala emphatically denies the charges, stemming from his time as an army commander in the war against the Shining Path guerrilla movement. According to upside-world.org, the U.S. Agency for International Development has given \$762,750 to Coordinadora organizations, arousing suspicions that Washington is meddling to prevent a Humala victory.

VENEZUELA SHARES OIL WEALTH

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez expanded his "petro-diplomacy" to El Salvador on April 5 by reaching an agreement with 20 leftist mayors to provide their towns with low-cost oil. Under the terms of the deal, Venezuela will supply 100,000 barrels of petroleum per month to El Salvador, which will provide for 30 percent of the Salvadoran population's energy needs. Venezuela has created programs that have provided subsidized oil to a number of countries in the Caribbean and Latin America as well

AFRICA FOOD CRISIS GROWS

The U.N. World Food Program (WFP) reduced food rations to 3.5 million hungry people in Sudan last month due to a funding shortage. The WFP has only a tiny fraction of the \$764 million that is needed to feed more than 6 million people across Sudan in 2006. The cutback comes at a time when Africa's food crisis is expanding. 45 million people in 27 sub-Saharan countries are now affected, according to the WFP. —D. Paneth

as several U.S. communities, including the Bronx.

ARMY RECRUITING LAGS

The U.S. Army's latest numbers show recruiting lagging behind last year's performance. In March, 5,396 new recruits joined, bringing the total for the first half of the fiscal 2006 recruiting year to 31,369 recruits, compared to 32,106 at this time last year. The Army has set a mission for fiscal 2006, which ends on Sept. 30, of sending 80,000 recruits into boot camp, the same goal that it missed by more than 6,600 in fiscal 2005. Army recruiters are looking to make



up ground during the summer once students are out of school. However, they may face a powerful obstacle. "The Iraq war has damaged the Army's relationship with its most important recruiting target — not the 18-year-old but their mother," defense analyst Daniel Goure of the Lexington Institute told Reuters. "That's been the real issue. And mothers are hard to convince."

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Shopping In Eden

BY NICHOLAS POWERS

Is shopping a way to buy community? I went to the new Trader Joe's on 14th Street, curious about a store that when it opened, had 100 people lined outside. They waited and entered and left happy. When I got in and read the labels — whole grain bread, antioxidant berries, raw nuts — I realized the cause of their joy. We were buying Eden.

Trader Joe's promises that its food is healthy, delivered directly (and cheaper) by cutting out the Middle Man and it's taste-tested. The first promise is health but organic food is not about health. In fact that may be its most supple alibi. When we cook and spice it, preserve and package it, we make food into a sign that gives physical nourishment and ideological certainty. When we eat organic we consume the code of purity, of a lost connection to nature that reaffirms our salvation from the dangerously poisoned world of artificial ingredients and artificial people.

At the other end of Union Square is Whole Foods Market, a larger store, more organic foods, more expensive and less fun. No Hawaiian shirts. No quirky pirate shtick. Yet those are not the reasons it fails to inspire the devotion that Trader Joe's does. It's because they don't protect us from the Middle Man.

The Middle Man is the shadowy figure of American commerce; he intercepts goods in its vulnerable transit between the hard-working farmer and the honest buyer. He is the

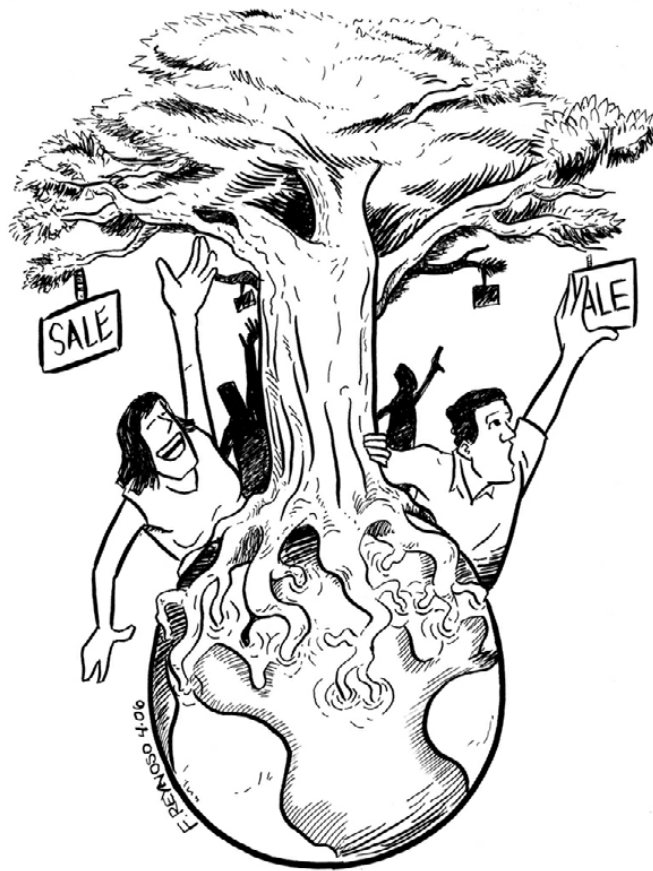
bureaucrat who lets food sit and rot while taking his profit. Trader Joe's plays on this equation, touting its, "honest, everyday low prices."

The Middle Man also alienates us from our food by putting his hands on it before it reaches our mouths, so the celebration of his absence derives from the fear of being touched by a stranger. Trader Joe's keeps us safe and boast about it in slogans such as, "We like to be part of our neighborhoods." Trader Joe's is not a part of a neighborhood it's the replacement for it so people stranded in alienated lives can feel safe as they gentrify New York of its dangerous diversity.

Feeling safe allows our inner-child to romp through the stores, hence the playful cartoon-like atmosphere. The clerks wear Hawaiian shirts. The walls are lined with cute names. It is a sense of safety that is increased by the cultural distance the food must cross. When I was there, a clerk at the Grand Sampling Station offered samples of exotica. "A little Thailand in your cup," she said.

Even though most foods have the Trader Joe label, it's the cosmopolitan address that sells it. Trader Joe's and other gourmet stores offer an international experience; cheeses from France and Ireland and Switzerland, sauces from Thailand or Mexico. As delicacies from the world come in, their tasting panel translates the foreign into the familiar and gives customers the freedom to taste global-citizenship.

I went home with bags of healthy food but



feed the international tastes of middle-class whites while in Brooklyn, immigrants sold junk food to working-class blacks. Three people stood in line, each one yelled through the plastic shield for beer or cigarettes or candy. Each set coins in the turn-box and pushed, the man inside took it, put a bag and revolved it again. The customers grabbed their bags and stalked off.

The plastic shield is a material sign of fear and distrust of customers with no self-control. When night falls, stores in Bed-Stuy encase their employees in bulletproof booths, it's a backwards zoo, where animals roam free and the handlers hide inside. Unlike the Eden of Trader Joe's, where communion between man and nature reigned, here it was the

"concrete jungle" where race and class oppression, the legacy of Social Darwinism, turned us into competitors.

I got my snack and went home. A black guy saw me, pointed at my dreads and nodded, "Respect bredrin, Lion of Judah." I nodded and hid my Twinkie, I didn't want him to know how far from salvation I was willing to fall.

The @-string

The Resurrection of Roky Erickson

BY STEVE WISHNIA

If you had seen Roky Erickson wandering around Austin, Texas around 1990, you probably would have thought he was homeless, a genial old hippie with matted hair, missing teeth, and LSD-fried brains. You wouldn't have guessed that he was a legendary '60s psychedelic-garage rocker, the lead singer for the 13th Floor Elevators, someone who'd played with Janis Joplin and inspired the bands that started the CBGBs scene.

Erickson wasn't actually homeless. He lived on the outskirts of Austin, surrounded by TVs, radios, and an electronic keyboard all on at once, blaring loud enough to drown out the voices in his head. That's where *You're Gonna Miss Me*, a documentary on his life that previewed here last month, opens.

The 13th Floor Elevators emerged in 1965-66, an amazingly fertile period of rock-'n'-roll—when, under the influence of psychedelic drugs and Bob Dylan, bands were beginning to write more complex lyrics and play more experimental, chaotic music without losing the drive, directness, and structure of the three-minute pop song. "You're Gonna Miss Me," the Elevators' first single and a minor national hit, was a classic of the style, a four-chord riff of the kind that anyone can play but it takes brilliance to write, pushed along by mysterious burbling noises from an amplified jug. "Slip Inside This House," from their 1967 second album, was an eight-minute marathon with lyrics like "Bedouins in tribes ascending/From the egg into the flower," but the beat never let up. Janis Joplin sang with them for a couple shows before she moved to San Francisco.



The Elevators fell apart after Erickson was busted for pot in 1969. Texas law enforcement was not friendly to countercultural stoners; the year before, Houston black activist Lee Otis Johnson had gotten 30 years for one joint. Erickson, who had already had a nervous breakdown and taken copious amounts of LSD, pleaded insanity. He was sent to an institution for the criminally insane, where he was given shock treatment and Thorazine and played in the house band with three psycho killers.

He came out severely damaged. In 1975, he went to a lawyer to have himself declared

"not an earthling," hoping it would "prove to the person who is putting electrical shocks in my head that I am an alien." His songs reflected his obsessions with horror movies, evil, and the Soviet Union: "I Walked With a Zombie," "Two-Headed Dog" ("two-headed dog, two-headed dog, I've been working in the Kremlin with a two-headed dog"), and "Bloody Hammer," a wounded brain's scream of protest against psychiatric torture. Over the next decade, he played those songs around Texas, backed by bands called the Aliens, the Explosives, and Evil Hook Wildlife

E.T., and recorded several albums. Live, they played brilliantly dense, fiery rock-'n'-roll; on record, he mixed in softer love songs and hippified acoustica.

In the outside world, his reputation was rising, as nascent punk-rockers unearthed garage-band rock from the dustbin. Television, the group that talked Hilly Krystal into booking rock bands at CBGB's, covered the Elevators' "Fire Engine," and Patti Smith called him an inspiration. He also became a godhead for the Austin music scene and the early-'90s "alternative" rockers, from Sonic Youth to the Butthole Surfers.

By the late '80s, though, he had deteriorated significantly. He stopped performing and lived reclusively, cared for by his mother, who didn't believe in psychotherapy or medication; *You're Gonna Miss Me* shows her constructing storyboard collages of family photos, which she says were her attempt to convince herself that she had been a good mother. Sumner Erickson, Roky's youngest brother and the tuba player for the Pittsburgh Symphony, eventually rescued him, winning an intrafamily court dispute over his care.

2005 was the year of Roky's public resurrection. The *I Have Always Been Here Before* best-of collected 43 of his songs from 1965-1995 onto a double CD. He resumed performing too, appearing at the Austin City Limits festival with the Explosives in September. At the end of the set, he looked out at the rapt crowd with a "you really like me" grin. Out at the crowd of middle-aged Austin rockers, two fans who'd flown in from Norway, and one New Yorker who'd fallen in love with the Elevators' music in a St. Marks Place record store in 8th grade.

True Horror

SLITHER
DIRECTED BY JAMES GUNN

During the golden age of early 1970s American cinema, a group of talented directors used the familiar tropes of genre filmmaking to highlight the political and social woes of the Watergate era.

So perhaps we should thank our current administration for a series of recent genre films, like 2005's *Land of the Dead*, which captures a similar sense of the dread and paranoia widely felt across the country today. Not surprisingly, the best of these horror/thrillers have been made by directors like George Romero, Joe Dante, and David Cronenberg — respectable filmmakers who, despite their A-list names, got their start directing enjoyably schlocky B-movies laced with socio-political subtext.

It might be too soon to tell, but *Slither*, the debut film of screenwriter James Gunn (2004's *Dawn of the Dead* remake) shows a promising talent working in the same vein. Crafting the small-town monster movie into a broadly absurd horror-comedy, Gunn refuses to take his story seriously, which makes his satire on mindless American gluttony and the red state-blue state divide all the easier to embrace.

After stumbling upon a crashed meteor in the woods outside of Wheelys, Grant Grant (bald Michael Rooker) develops hideous lesions, an unstoppable craving for red meat, and two odd chest tentacles. While the townspeople calmly chalk these changes up to Lyme disease, Grant's devoted wife Starla (charming Elizabeth Banks) can't shake the image of their basement turned into a pet abattoir. Soon enough, Grant completes his mutation into a Jabba-esque slug monster, while an infected young woman balloons so much from

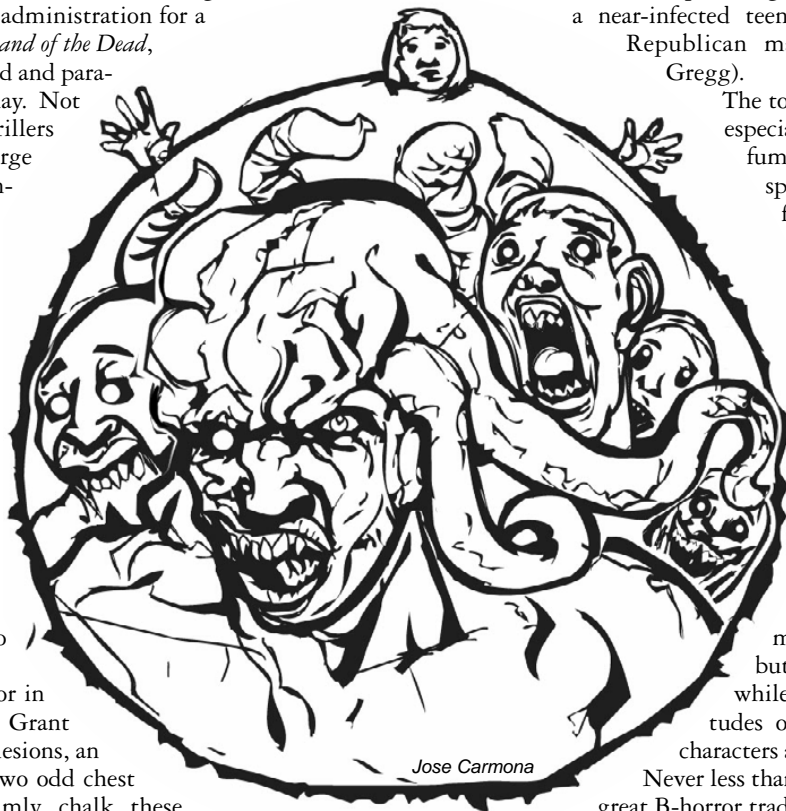
the excessive meat, she explodes, sending tiny mouth-invading creatures all over town.

The repulsive blood-red slugs demand consumption and once inside their hosts, create a starving zombie collective that shares Grant's thoughts. Still longing for his high school love Starla, town sheriff Bill Pardy (a droll Nathan Fillion) helps her fight the slug invasion with the aid of a near-infected teen (Tania Saulnier) and a corrupt Republican mayor (a way-over-the-top Clark Gregg).

The townspeople are idiotic but loveable, especially Fillion as the kind of hero who fumbles a grenade at the climax and speaks out against hunting (a horror first?). Rooker somehow keeps his humanity, and the love of conflicted Starla, even as he bodily absorbs various townspeople in the film's most indelible image. Gunn's main success here lies in building sequences that are both horrifying and ridiculous, capturing that narrow space of primal response shared by screams and laughter.

This makes the subtext mere icing: undifferentiated American masses, mindlessly consuming meat, parroting the words of their monstrous leader — it's not subtle, but it's not heavy-handed either. And while Gunn's film may critique the attitudes of red-state USA, his sympathetic characters are far from bleeding-heart liberals. Never less than totally gross, *Slither* continues the great B-horror tradition of blending gore, humor, and genuine scares, while offering proof that the hybrid genre of horror-comedy might be an ideal form for political persuasion and social commentary. It's hard to feel lectured to when your laugh is caught in a scream.

—Charlie Bass



Jose Carmona

The World Is A Ghetto

PLANET OF SLUMS

BY MIKE DAVIS
VERSO BOOKS

Shacks stretching on the outskirts of a city as far as the eye can see and poverty entrenched like an occupying army, slums are a growing phenomenon in the global south. In his brilliant book *Planet of the Slums*, prophet of doom Mike Davis, presents slums as the creation of complex socioeconomic forces that produce profound poverty but also a new class existing on the margins of marginality.

Peasants uprooted from their lands, public sector workers laid-off due to Structural Adjustment Programs, refugees fleeing war and just plain poor migrants looking for opportunity in the cities of the Third World make their claim on plots removed from the urban core of metropolises like Kinshasa, Mumbai, Mexico City, Sao Paulo, Sadr City in Baghdad and Beijing. Physically, the slums sit precariously on unstable hills, sink in their own excrement, choke on their toxicity and are ripe for repression from landlords and cops. Over a billion people live in the world's slums, and Davis estimates that 25 million more flood into these areas a year. Many citizens of the slums labor in the informal work sector in survival mode selling wares, food and engage in petty bartering creating a new informal slum class.

"The global forces 'pushing' people from the countryside — mechanization in Java and India, food imports in Mexico...civil war and drought throughout Africa...seem to sustain urbanization even when the 'pull' of the city is drastically weakened by debt and depression. At the same time, rapid urban growth in the context of structural adjustment, currency devaluation and state retrenchment has been an inevitable recipe for the mass production of slums. Much of the urban

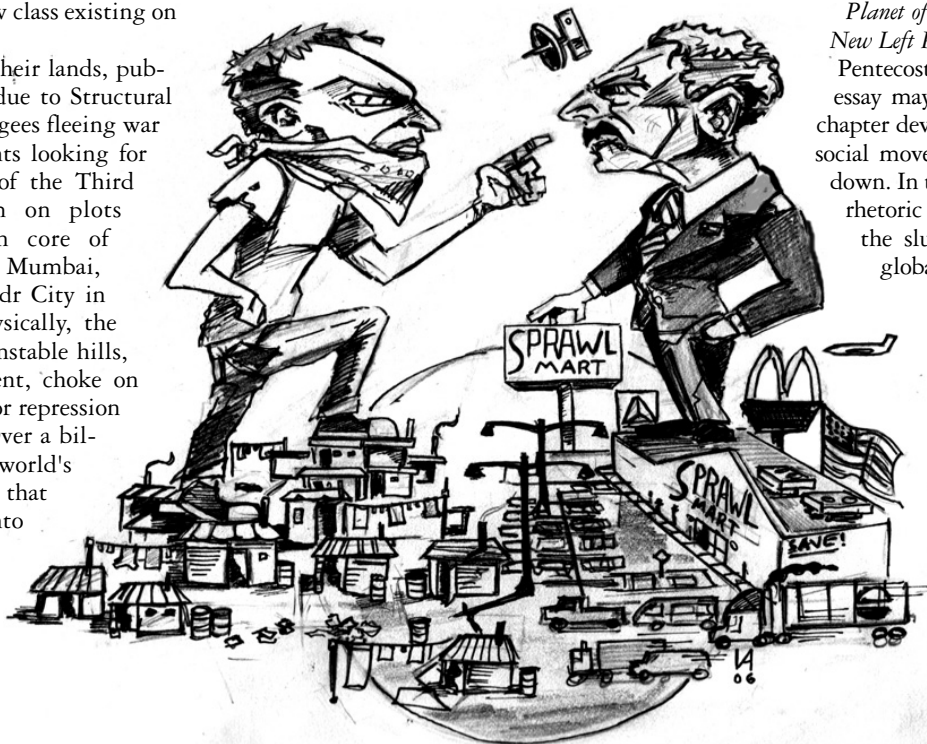
world, as a result, is rushing backwards to the age of Dickens."

In the last chapter of *Planet of the Slums*, Davis makes connections between the downward spiral of living conditions and the rise of evangelical Christianity. In Kinshasa, parents, spurred by preachers encouraging bizarre talk of child witches, put their kids to the street. The irrational belief in witches aside, many parents unable to provide for their family hope their children find square meals and a roof in the custody of NGOs.

Planet of the Slums started as an essay in the *New Left Review* and was heavy on the role of Pentecostalism in the slums. Readers of that essay may be perplexed to see only the last chapter devoted to this emerging conservative social movement. But this is Davis' only let down. In the Epilogue, Davis flips the right's rhetoric of class of cultures in Iraq, claiming the slum will be the new resistance to global capitalistic domination.

"The unemployed teenage fighters of the 'Mahdi Army' in Baghdad's Sadr City taunt American occupiers with the promise that their main boulevard is 'Vietnam Street.' But the war planners don't blanch. They now assert that the 'feral, failed cities' of the Third World, will be the distinctive battle-space of the twenty-first century. This is the true 'clash of civilizations.'"

—Bennett Baumer



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Workers in the United States have a rich tradition of fighting back and achieving gains previously thought unthinkable, but that history remains largely hidden. *Subterranean Fire* brings that history to light and reveals its lessons for today, examining the history of workers' resistance from the nineteenth century to the present.

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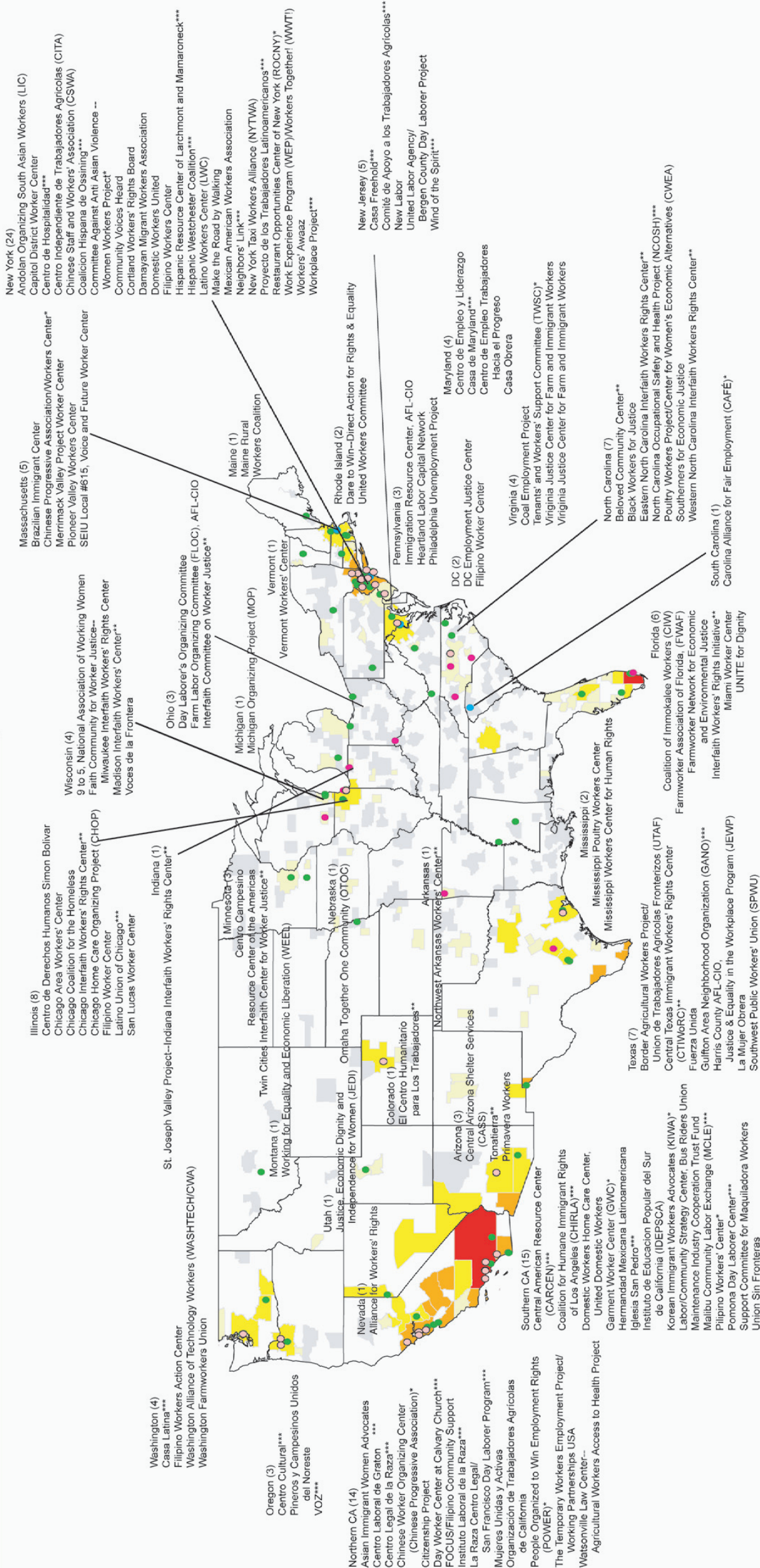
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Worker Centers
Community-Based and Led Worker Organizing Projects



There are at least 139 worker centers in 31 states: 29 in California; 24 in New York; 8 in Illinois; 7 in North Carolina and Texas; 6 in Florida; 5 in MA, NJ; 4 in MD, VA, WA, WI; 3 in AZ, MN, OH, OR, PA; 2 in DC, MS, RI; 1 in AR, CO, IN, ME, MI, MT, NE, NV, SC, UT, VT.

About one third (37%) of worker centers belong to one of three national networks:

Enlace (11), IWJ: Interfaith Worker Justice (11), and NDLON: National Day Laborer Organizing Network (29).

The largest network, NDLON, was founded in 2001 and has brought together day laborer centers from all over the country to share experiences, increase the participation of day laborers in the operation of the centers and organizing work, and help set up new centers.

ENLACE, a network of local low wage worker organizing projects in the US and Mexico, brings together 26 unions and community organizations, including 11 worker centers, and provides training specifically tailored to community-based worker organizing projects.

IWJ provides ongoing organizational development, organizing, legislative and fundraising support to its affiliates and has played a leadership role in the fight to raise the federal minimum wage as well as in forming coalitions with state and federal government agencies.

By the Census definition, the US is 11.1% foreign born (12.9% within metro areas). Under a more expansive definition that includes Puerto Rican born and children in households where all parents are foreign born, the US is 14% immigrants. Of immigrants, 17.8% live in poverty, 22.4% of recent immigrants (arrived in last 10 years) live in poverty (Chapman and Bernstein, "Immigration and Poverty" EPI Briefing Paper 130, Sept. 2002).

Data Sources:
Worker Center Locations: Phoenix Fund Clearinghouse Listing, National Day Laborer Organizing Network, National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice (NICWJ) and independently gathered.
Foreign Born: US Census 2000 SF3 Table P21



Prepared by Janice Fine, Tam Doan and Jon Werberg of the National Study on Immigrant Worker Centers 2005. Please send corrections to Janice at jfine@communitychange.org or Tam at tdoan@alum.mit.edu.



By GEOFFREY BOYCE
Photos by Peter Holderness

After distributing clean drinking water to migrants crossing through the Sonoran desert, Sergio Panduro carries an empty barrel back to the *Agua por la Vida* center.

TUCSON, Arizona—Last July 9, as temperatures soared past 110 degrees, Shanti Sellz and Daniel Strauss came upon a group of nine migrants who had been in the Sonoran desert for days, attempting to cross into the United States. Three of these men had fallen seriously ill, unable to hold down water, vomiting blood and bleeding from the rectum.

Sellz and Strauss, volunteers with the humanitarian No More Deaths movement, contacted two doctors and a nurse, who instructed them to bring the three men to Tucson for emergency medical care. Before they could reach medical care, however, U.S. Border Patrol agents arrested all five. The two aid workers were charged with multiple felonies and now face up to 15 years in prison and \$500,000 in fines.

While the three men they rescued were returned to Mexico, they were fortunate to avoid joining the 415 women, children and men who died mainly from dehydration and heat stroke after crossing the border in 2005. July was the deadliest month on record for the Arizona-Mexico border, with 78 bodies recovered. These deaths are the result of saturating urbanized border areas with military-style enforcement, channeling traffic through remote and dangerous regions of the Arizona desert.

The arrest of Sellz and Strauss, as well as the plight of the immigrants they attempted to assist, dramatizes the national debate taking place in Congress,

the media and the streets. Since early March, massive demonstrations nationwide have brought out millions of immigrants and their supporters in protest of federal legislation that will escalate border militarization, and criminalize and disenfranchise undocumented workers, their families and communities.

WAKING A SLEEPING GIANT

Last December, the House of Representatives passed The Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act (HR 4437), which would change the invalid status of an estimated 12 million immigrants from a civil violation to a federal felony. It would also potentially expand the definition of "alien smuggling" to include anyone who knowingly provides assistance to an undocumented immigrant.

The Senate has been debating offering some undocumented immigrants the possibility of citizenship, but failed to approve any bill before Congress recessed for two weeks on April 7. Proposed Senate legislation would have allowed immigrants here longer than five years to apply for citizenship provided they maintain constant employment, pay fines and back taxes, and learn English, but it would have also enacted many punitive measures (see article, page 3).

Introduced by Rep. James Sensenbrenner (R-Wisc.), H.R. 4437 is essentially a wish list of meas-

ures proposed by anti-immigration groups like the Federation of Americans for Immigration Reform, NumbersUSA and the Center for Immigration Studies. These groups have been advocating for years to use the military to seal off the border with Mexico, enact a moratorium on all legal immigration, and round-up and deport all undocumented immigrants.

According to the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), these organizations are funded by U.S. Inc., a foundation that also provides resources to a number of vigilante groups and organizations such as California's Save Our State and the Council of Conservatives, both of which are termed hate groups by the SPLC.

The House bill has produced unprecedented ire from immigrants and their advocates, provoking the unprecedented series of marches, student walkouts, and wildcat strikes since March.

Zoe Hammer, an organizer with the southern Arizona-based Border Action Network, is frank in her analysis of this bill. "People have called H.R.4437 the ethnic cleansing plan, it's extremely racist, to make 13 million people felons and try and deport them."

While attention has been paid to the threat to social service providers, the provision criminalizing aid to undocumented immigrants would more likely be applied to those who live and work with them,

Free Trade, Controlled Labor

By STEEV HISE

On Jan. 1, 1994, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) went into effect, liberalizing trade, investment and capital flows across Mexico, Canada and the United States. One of the effects of NAFTA has been to increase Mexican immigration into the United States as many small farmers have lost their lands, unable to compete against heavily subsidized U.S. agribusinesses.

One of NAFTA's main provisions was the reduction of price supports by the Mexican government for agricultural products. The treaty permitted the United States to continue agricultural subsidies, however, allowing farmers to sell their agricultural products on the Mexican market at rock-bottom prices – in the case of corn, about 35 percent below the cost of production. From 1995 to 2004, U.S. corn farmers received \$41.9 billion in government subsidies.

A study published in 2004 by the nonprofit policy group Americas Program found that while the price of domestic corn in Mexico has fallen since 1994 the price of corn-based tortillas has increased by 279 percent. While some 3 million farmers in Mexico continue to grow corn, Mexico has now switched from a corn-exporting country to a corn-importing country.

The cultivation of corn first began in Mexico some 5,000 years ago, and thousands of varieties abound through the country. As a consequence of the low prices, many small farmers and their families have had to leave their homes and their land to survive. For those farmers who choose to stay, the only crops they can still make a living from are usually marijuana and poppies.

"Since the passage of NAFTA in 1994, more than three million campesinos have been forced to abandon agricultural production and look for jobs in maquiladoras [export-only factories] or as undocumented workers in the U.S.," said Tom Hansen, National Coordinator for the Mexico Solidarity Network.

In 2000, Mexican president Vicente Fox raised the idea of free flow of people across the U.S.-Mexico border as a second phase of NAFTA. The events of Sept. 11 derailed this plan, however.

"Immigration morphed from a largely temporary, circular phenomena pre-1994 that involved perhaps 100,000 Mexicans annually, to a more permanent trend that involves almost half-a-million Mexicans annually, representing about one percent of the entire Mexican workforce," Hansen stated.

such as families and small businesses. H.R. 4437 would also intensify the militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border, the centerpiece of which is a 700-mile hi-tech security wall that would impact negatively communities that straddle the border, particularly indigenous ones, as well as migrants, animal populations and ecosystems.

Among immigrant-rights advocates, demands are expanding to full-scale legalization of undocumented workers, and an end to abuse and rights violations. Many advocates also note that some of the proposals to creating a "path" for citizenship are ripe for abuse. Requiring undocumented immigrants to have continuous employment leaves them vulnerable to unscrupulous employers who will essentially be given control over their legal status.

"What the community wants are real reforms, nothing short of legalization of all those who are in the country without documents and the mobilization will continue to grow until this is achieved," said Margo Cowan, a volunteer lawyer with Arizona's No More Deaths coalition.

THE MAINSTREAMING OF HATE

On April 1, 2006, the Minuteman Project (MMP) once again brought hundreds of volunteers to southern Arizona to monitor the border for undocumented immigrants. Although their numbers and energy appeared diminished compared to last year, the potential for violence is still real.

For more than a year Ray Ybarra, of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), has organized volunteers to monitor Minuteman activity in the field in order to document abuse. "The MMP have created a pathway to mainstream hate and a violent response toward immigration. They've made it acceptable to go out there with a gun and hunt human beings," Ybarra said. Minuteman organizers are spinning the pro-immi-



COLECTIVO TANIPERLA artists paint a mural on the Mexican side of the "tortilla curtain" border wall.

grant mobilization as proof of impending social disorder and the result of unchecked immigration.

"The government will soon see that allowing millions of illegals into the country has consequences. Do we really think these people, who are demanding rights they have no right to, will peacefully disappear when they are told to go home," said MMP organizer Angela Marie "Bay" Buchanan. She is also the sister of Patrick Buchanan, a noted nativist and three-time presidential candidate.

Some prominent Minuteman organizers, such as Jim Gilchrist, have raised the specter of violence. On March 30, he told the Orange County Observer, "I'm not going to promote insurrection, but if it happens, it will be on the conscience of the members of Congress who are doing this. I will not promote violence in resolving this, but I will not stop others who might pursue that."

For the most part, the relationship between this new anti-immigration movement and the nativist militia movement of the 1990s has been overlooked. "I was on TV debating Bob Wright, the commander of the First Brigade New Mexico Militia and the new national director of training for the MMP," Ybarra said. "In the late 1990s there's no way a militia guy would be on TV to debate immigration and border policy. They've changed their rhetoric so that the media and politicians are better able to jump on board with an extremist agenda."

Today, MMP organizers Chris Simcox and Gilchrist appear on national television and radio as guests of Fox News's Sean Hannity and CNN's Lou Dobbs, who has traveled to Arizona to champion their cause.

DEATH IN THE BORDERLANDS

Along the border there is a clear indication of the human costs of focusing on the issue of immigration as solely one of law enforcement. In 2004, the Arizona Border Control Initiative added hundreds of agents to the Tucson Border Patrol Sector, as well as electronic sensors, aerial drones and other military technologies. The increased use of helicopters forces groups of migrants to scatter to evade detection, making it more likely that will get lost and die. New helicopters were purchased, which, when used to scatter groups of migrants, leave individuals lost, isolated and subject to a terrible fate. In 2005 alone, 282 migrant deaths occurred in the Tucson Sector.

While many of the migrants crossing the border are seeking work, others are coming merely to reunite with family already in this country, including infants, children and the elderly, who are particularly vulnerable to sickness and predation. Because of deep-seated economic and social factors driving immigration, the ongoing militarization of the border has done little to resolve the crisis.

In response, numerous organizations have sprung up along the border in Arizona as part of the No More Deaths coalition. In addition to advocacy and organizing, these groups engage in humanitarian assistance by bringing food, water and medical assistance to migrants in the desert. During the summer months, No More Deaths volunteers operate a 24-hour camp near the border from which they are able to patrol remote trails and roads in search of people in distress.

Around the country, thousands have rallied in support of Sellz and Strauss since their arrest. Under the campaign "Humanitarian Aid is Never a Crime," more



Minuteman vigilantes

250 YEARS OF BACKLASH

By BENNETT BAUMER

Even before the United States declared independence, anti-immigration sentiment was part of the American fabric. In 1751, Benjamin Franklin declared, "Why should Pennsylvania, founded by the English, become a Colony of Aliens, who will shortly be so numerous as to Germanize us, instead of our Anglifying them."

The movement opposed to the entry of immigrants has often been described as "nativism," initially referring to white Protestants opposed to Catholic immigration.

In the first half of the 19th century, a secretive group known as the "Know Nothings" exploited fears of a "foreign invasion" of Irish and German immigrants.

The Know Nothings flourished in the mid-1850s under the banner of the American Party and demanded that only the native born be allowed to hold public office and the naturalization period be increased from 5 to 21 years.

Divided over slavery, the Know Nothings collapsed after the election of 1856 and anti-immigration sentiments subsided until the 1870s when a backlash developed against Chinese workers.

In 1882 Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, suspending all immigration of Chinese for 10 years and forbidding any court to naturalize Chinese. The act was not repealed until 1943.

White fright focused on the Japanese as well. Congress passed the Gentleman's Agreement of 1907, which froze Japanese immigration, and California passed a state law prohibiting Japanese people from owning property.

Anti-immigrant sentiment surged after the U.S. entered World War I in April 1917 and even more after the Russian Revolution that October.

War-time repression culminated in the Palmer Raids (1918-1921), which featured warrantless searches and seizures targeting Eastern Europeans and Jewish emigrants with leftist leanings, as well as anarchists, socialists, communists and unions in general. More than 10,000 were arrested in January 1920 alone and hundreds of non-naturalized immigrants were deported.

After WWI, the Quota Act restricted immigration to three percent of a nationality's presence already in the country, further penalizing Asians.

Many boosters of the Palmer Raids also supported America's fascist movements that spread anti-Semitism and sympathized with the Axis Powers in the 1930s. These attitudes influenced President Roosevelt's decision in 1939 to bar S.S. St. Louis from landing in the U.S. Carrying 937 refugees fleeing Nazi Germany, the ship was forced to return and many eventually died in concentration camps.

Current anti-Latino immigrant sentiments are rooted in a 1942 guest worker scheme. In place until 1964, the Bracero Program brought in more than 4.5 million Mexican farm workers on a temporary basis. The program was expanded during a labor shortage created by the Korean War, but an economic recession led to wave of anti-immigration sentiment and the launching of "Operation Wetback" in 1953. The INS claimed that 1.3 million Mexicans were deported or fled in fear.

than 60,000 postcards have been sent to prosecuting U.S. Attorney Paul Charlton, calling on him to drop the charges. Thousands more have pledged to engage in the same activity for which the two volunteers face charges. Despite the public opposition, the U.S. government continues to move forward with the case, and a trial is likely in early summer.

Jessica Lee and Steev Hise also contributed to this article.

For more information:

nomoredeaths.org
arizona.indymedia.org

‘Virtual’ Fence = Dumb Idea

By JESSICA LEE

In March the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) quietly announced a request for proposals for the Secure Border Initiative Network (SBInet), a complex program designed to mix technology, infrastructure and staffing to secure more than 6,000 miles of border with Canada and Mexico.

Ericsson Inc., Lockheed Martin Corp. Raytheon Co., Northrop Grumman Corp., and Boeing Co. are competing to be the lead contractor for SBInet. The main task is to integrate data from satellites, electronic sensors, unmanned aerial vehicles, and video with new infrastructure, computer and communication software, and law enforcement components into one program.

Following on the Integrated Surveillance Intelligence System and America's Shield

Initiative, the \$1.3 billion SBInet contract is at least the third program to apply a technological fix to the issue of border control.

According to govexec.com reporter Chris Stroh, the previous two initiatives "were both intended to deliver state-of-the-art surveillance technology to the borders. But the Homeland Security Department's inspector general reported last summer that much of the equipment either was not installed or did not work."

In a speech to the Heritage Foundation last month, DHS Secretary Michael Chertoff proclaimed, "We are going to build ourselves what I call a virtual fence, not a fence of barbed wire and bricks and mortar, which I will tell you simply doesn't work but rather a smart fence, a fence that makes use of physical tools, but also tools about information



EL NORTE: Three Mexican men wait to cross the border.

sharing and information management that let us identify people coming across the border."

DHS is approaching border security through a "threat-based approach," in which localized segments of the U.S. border are prioritized by the perceived risk of terrorism.

Lockheed Martin has spent a year traveling around the country holding vendor industry days, in the attempt to secure the interest of small, local suppliers and consultants who

are familiar with the geographic and threat challenges.

"The goal is to create a seamless border," said Alan Bloodgood, a Lockheed Martin executive manager who presented SBInet to a roomful of vendors on March 23 in Tucson, Arizona.

"We cannot put enough soldiers on the ground, we need an integrated technological solution," said Michael Newberry, president of Mirametrics, Inc., a Tucson-based firm focused on image-processing software. Newberry, who lives within 25 miles of the Mexican border, said that undocumented migrants often knock on his door in need of food or water.

The DHS is also promoting a "guest worker" program as integral to border control. The SBInet contract is expected to be awarded September 2006.